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Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman Joint Hearing of the Health and Trade Subcommittees of the Energy and Commerce Committee March 10, 2005

Today's hearing addresses an important public health issue — the sharp rise in steroid use among athletes, including teenage athletes, over the last decade.

In 1993, one in every 45 high school students reported ever using illegal steroids.

By 1999, this rate had increased to one in every 27 high school students.

In 2003, the last year for which data are available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ... one in every 16 high school students reported illegal steroid use.

This trend is alarming because these drugs are so dangerous.

Anabolic steroids are related to testosterone, a hormone that plays a critical role in normal adolescent development.

But teenagers do not take a natural amount of these hormones. They take 10, 20 or even 50 times normal doses.

At such high levels, anabolic steroids can signal to the bones to stop growing, cause premature heart disease, lead to life-threatening liver problems, and cause significant emotional disturbances, personality changes and psychiatric disease.

In addition to these risks, some steroids are administered by hypodermic syringe. Teenagers who swap dirty needles can become infected with hepatitis and AIDS.

This is a serious public health issue.

It's also a touchy subject.

Recently, the *Dallas Morning News* reported about a mother who found a vial of clear liquid and some syringes in her son's closet. He confessed to having used steroids to become a

better athlete. He told her he had obtained the steroids from a player on his high school football team.

She called the assistant principal. The assistant principal called the football coach, who angrily denied a problem. He told the newspaper, "This lady is a liar. There's nobody in my program who's on steroids."

But to his credit, the coach didn't let it end there.

He met with his players and demanded to know the truth. Eventually, nine athletes admitted to steroid use. The community is now aware of its problem and is already taking action.

Investigating steroid use is as difficult as it is necessary — both for a high school football team in Texas ... and for a major sports league.

There are some who don't want to investigate these issues. They would prefer that we looked the other way and didn't ask hard questions.

I think the Chairman is doing the right thing in holding today's hearing, and Tom Davis, the Chair of the Government Reform Committee, is doing the right thing in holding a hearing next week.

The American people deserve the truth and we have a responsibility to help them find it.